

AGGRAVATED ASSAULT

DEFINITION

Aggravated assault is an unlawful attack by one person upon another for the purpose of inflicting severe or aggravated bodily injury. This type of assault is usually accompanied by the use of a weapon or by means likely to produce death or great bodily harm. Attempts are included since it is not necessary that an injury result when a gun, knife, or other weapon is used which could and probably would result in serious personal injury if the crime were successfully completed.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of offenses</i>	<i>Rate per 100,000 inhabitants</i>
1999	911,740	334.3
2000	910,744	323.6
Percent change	-0.1	-3.2

Reported aggravated assault figures showed a slight decline from the preceding year's figures. The 2000 estimated total of 910,744 aggravated assaults represented a 0.1-percent decrease from 1999 data for this offense. Aggravated assault comprised 63.9 percent of all the violent crimes in 2000.

Among the Nation's regions, the Midwest had a 2.1-percent decline in reported aggravated assaults and the Northeast a 0.5-percent decrease. Aggravated assault volumes rose 0.9 percent in the West and 0.4 percent in the Southern Region. The geographic distribution among the regions in 2000 shows that the most populous Southern Region had 42.6 percent of the aggravated assault volume. The Western Region followed with 23.6 percent, the Midwestern Region with 18.4 percent, and the Northeastern Region with 15.4 percent. (See Tables 3 and 4.)

The highest number of aggravated assaults, according to 2000 monthly distribution figures, took place in May, with 9.3 percent of the total reported. The fewest incidents occurred in February, November, and December, with 7.5 percent of the total distribution recorded for each of those months. (See Table 2.23.)

Table 2.23

Aggravated Assault by Month
Percent distribution, 1996-2000

Month	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
January	7.8	7.5	7.9	7.9	7.6
February	7.4	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.5
March	8.0	8.3	8.1	8.0	8.5
April	8.1	8.2	8.3	8.3	8.4
May	8.9	9.3	9.1	9.1	9.3
June	9.1	9.0	8.9	8.8	8.6
July	9.4	9.5	9.4	9.5	9.0
August	9.3	9.4	9.4	9.2	8.8
September	8.6	8.8	8.7	8.5	8.6
October	8.5	8.4	8.3	8.6	8.7
November	7.4	7.5	7.4	7.7	7.5
December	7.6	7.2	7.4	7.5	7.5

Collectively, the Nation's cities experienced a 0.2-percent increase in aggravated assaults from 1999 to 2000. Among city population groupings, increases were seen in every population group except in cities of 100,000-249,999 inhabitants (down 0.9 percent) and those with populations of 25,000-49,999 (down 0.5 percent). The number of aggravated assaults in rural counties declined 3.7 percent. Aggravated assaults rose 0.2 percent in suburban counties. (See Table 12.)

Five- and 10-year trends for the country as a whole show aggravated assaults 12.2 percent lower than in 1996 and 16.7 percent below the 1991 figure. (See Table 1.)

Rate

Nationwide during 2000, there were 323.6 victims of aggravated assault per 100,000 inhabitants. The rate was 3.2 percent lower than in 1999 and represented a 17.2-percent drop from the 1996 rate. The 2000 rate was down 25.3 percent from the 1991 rate.

Aggravated assaults occurred in metropolitan areas at a rate of 349.2 per 100,000 inhabitants, somewhat higher than the national average. Cities outside metropolitan areas experienced a rate of 302.5 and rural counties a rate of 167.8.

Compared to the preceding year's rate, aggravated assault rates during 2000 were down in all regions. The aggravated assault rate was 387.3 per 100,000 people in the South, 339.5 in the West, 261.2 in the Northeast, and 260.9 in the Midwest. The Northeast and Midwest each registered a 3.8-percent drop; the South decreased by 3.4 percent; and the West experienced a 2.3-percent decline. (See Table 4.)

Nature

Blunt objects or other dangerous weapons accounted for 35.9 percent of the weapons used in aggravated assaults in 2000. Personal weapons such as hands, fists, feet, etc., were used in 28.0 percent of all aggravated assaults. Firearms were used in 18.1 percent of aggravated assaults, and knives or cutting instruments were employed in 18.0 percent.

Aggravated assaults using firearms decreased 1.3 percent from 1999 to 2000 figures. Aggravated assaults with knives or cutting instruments and those with personal weapons showed virtually no change. However, those committed with blunt instruments or other dangerous weapons increased 1.7 percent. State-by-state totals for weapons used in aggravated assaults during 2000 are shown in Table 22.

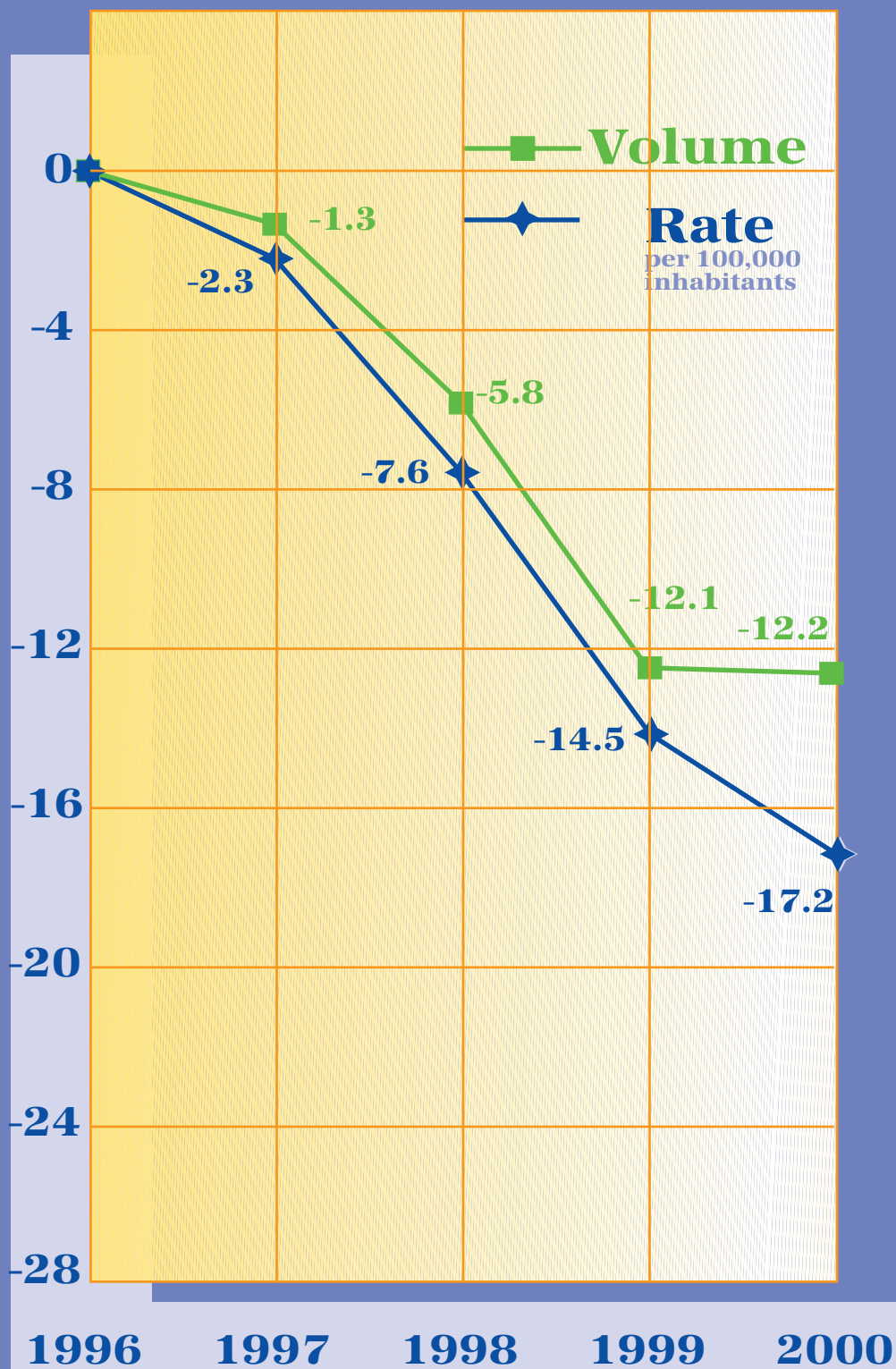
Table 2.24

Aggravated Assault, Types of Weapons Used
Percent distribution by region, 2000

Region	Total all weapons ¹	Firearms	Knives or cutting instruments	Other weapons (clubs, blunt objects, etc.)	Personal weapons
Total	100.0	18.1	18.0	35.8	28.1
Northeastern States	100.0	13.5	17.7	32.9	35.8
Midwestern States	100.0	19.9	18.3	35.5	26.3
Southern States	100.0	19.7	19.9	39.0	21.4
Western States	100.0	16.4	14.9	32.1	36.7

¹ Because of rounding, the percentages may not add to total.

FIGURE 2.11 AGGRAVATED ASSAULT



Law Enforcement Response

Law enforcement agencies nationwide recorded a 56.9-percent aggravated assault clearance rate during 2000. Rural and suburban county law enforcement agencies cleared 64.0 and 60.6 percent, respectively, and cities collectively recorded 55.4 percent cleared. Among the city groupings, those with populations under 10,000 recorded the highest aggravated assault clearance rate at 66.1 percent.

Regional aggravated assault clearances were highest in the Northeast at 63.9 percent. The West recorded a clearance rate of 57.2 percent, followed by the South at 55.9 percent and the Midwest at 53.5 percent.

Law enforcement personnel identified juveniles, persons under age 18, to be the assailants in 11.7 percent of the aggravated assaults cleared nationally. Persons in this age group were involved in 11.8 percent of these clearances in the Nation's cities and 11.9 percent of

aggravated assault clearances in suburban counties. In rural counties, law enforcement cleared 9.8 percent of aggravated assaults committed by juveniles.

Arrests for aggravated assaults represented 76.2 percent of violent crime arrests in 2000. By race, 63.5 percent of the estimated 478,417 persons arrested were white, 34.0 percent were black, and other races comprised the remainder. Persons under the age of 25 were the offenders in 39.9 percent of aggravated assault arrests. The majority of aggravated assault offenders, 79.9 percent, were male.

Arrests for aggravated assaults were down 0.9 percent in 2000 from the preceding year's totals. Arrests were also down 0.3 and 4.2 percent for adults and juveniles, respectively. The 5-year trend comparing 1996 to 2000 shows a decrease of 7.2 percent for total aggravated assault arrests. Adult arrest totals were also down 6.1 percent when compared to 1996 figures, and juvenile aggravated assault arrests decreased 13.7 percent.